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General and complete disarmament: transparency in armaments

Continuing operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and its further development

Note by the Secretary-General**

1. By its resolutions 52/38 R of 9 December 1997, 53/77 V of 4 December 1998 and 54/54 O of 1 December 1999, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report, with the assistance of a group of governmental experts, on the continuing operation of the Register of Conventional Arms and its further development, taking into account the work of the Conference on Disarmament, the views expressed by Member States and the reports of the Secretary-General on the continuing operation of the Register and its further development (A/52/316, A/49/316), with a view to a decision by the Assembly at its fifty-fifth session.

2. Pursuant to those resolutions, the Secretary-General has the honour to submit to the General Assembly the above-mentioned report, prepared with the assistance of the Group of Governmental Experts, on the continuing operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and its further development.

* A/55/150.
** Finalization of this report was dependent on the completion of work by the Group of Governmental Experts, which held its third and final session from 24 July to 4 August 2000.

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Report on the continuing operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and its further development

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Foreword by the Secretary-General

When it was first established in 1992, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms was recognized as an important step forward in international efforts to promote openness and transparency in military matters. Today, as part of a range of international instruments, the Register plays an important part in helping to prevent an excessive and destabilizing accumulation of arms and provides valuable data for bilateral and regional dialogues on security concerns.

In our rapidly globalizing world, security can no longer be pursued in isolation. We must strive to apply as much transparency as possible to matters related to defence policies and armaments. In this way, we can help minimize the risk of misunderstanding or miscalculation, and thereby contribute to greater trust and more stable relations among States. In this context, I welcome this unanimously adopted report by the 2000 Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

The report takes into account the work of the Disarmament Commission on international arms transfers, the work of the Conference on Disarmament, the views expressed by Member States and the 1994 and 1997 reports on the continuing operation and further development of the Register.

The level of participation in the Register in the first eight years has been encouraging. Consistent participation by almost all the major producers, exporters and importers of major conventional weapons has enabled it to cover the great bulk of the global trade in the Register's seven categories. A total of 149 Governments, including 146 Member States, have participated in the Register at least once.

Participation is not yet universal, however. Wider participation by Governments, especially in certain regions and subregions, is of paramount importance to the arms transparency process.

Some States do not see the Register, in its current form, as relevant to their essential security interests. It should be understood, however, that the Register is a dynamic instrument and that its scope can be expanded over time to reflect the full military potential of States.

I am encouraged that support for the Register through regional arrangements and agencies has continued to grow. It has been complemented by regional and subregional efforts to promote a higher degree of openness and transparency in military matters, while taking into account the legitimate security interests of States. In this regard, let me highlight the adoption by the Organization of American States in June 1999 of the landmark Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisition. The weapons categories it contains are identical to those in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

I encourage Member States to further the promising trend of increased voluntary reporting on military holdings and procurement through national production. The Group of Governmental Experts rightly recommends that the process of periodic review of the operation and further development of the Register should be continued, and that the General Assembly should decide at an early date on the next review. The Group envisages a number of activities to be undertaken by the United Nations in this regard. The Secretariat stands ready to provide all

possible assistance in further promoting the aims of the Register, with a view to achieving universal participation.

I owe a debt of gratitude to the members of the Group of Governmental Experts for their work in preparing this report, which I commend to the General Assembly for its consideration.

Letter of transmittal

4 August 2000

Sir,

I have the honour to submit herewith the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. The Group was appointed by you in pursuance of paragraph 5 (b) of General Assembly resolution 52/38 R of 9 December 1997, paragraph 4 (b) of resolution 53/77 V of 4 December 1998 and paragraph 4 (b) of resolution 54/54 O of 1 December 1999, respectively.

The governmental experts appointed were the following:

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The report was prepared between March and August 2000, during which the Group had three sessions in New York, the first from 6 to 10 March 2000, the second from 22 May to 2 June 2000 and the third from 24 July to 4 August 2000.

The members of the Group wish to express their appreciation for the assistance they received from members of the Secretariat of the United Nations. In particular, they wish to thank João Honwana, Chief of Conventional Arms Branch, Department for Disarmament Affairs, Nazir Kamal, who served as Secretary of the Group, and Major General Dipankar Banerjee (Retd.) who served as consultant to the Group. The Group is also grateful to Jayantha Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for the support received from him throughout its work.

I have been requested by the Group of Experts, as its Chairman, to submit to you, on its behalf, the present report which was unanimously approved.

(*Signed*) Rafael M. **Grossi**
Chairman of the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms

I. Introduction

A. Establishment of the Register

1. On 7 December 1988, by its resolution 43/75 I, entitled "International arms transfers", the General Assembly mandated an expert study on arms transfers, including their security and disarmament implications. The study on ways and means of promoting transparency in international transfers of conventional arms (A/46/301, annex), completed and transmitted by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly in 1991, highlighted the positive impact of transparency in armaments. Enhanced transparency, it stressed, could facilitate measures of limitation and restriction by increasing confidence and reducing the risk of misperception. A major recommendation of the study was that the United Nations should establish a universal and non-discriminatory arms transfer register as soon as possible. In that regard, it further recommended that the register should be so designed and maintained as to promote restraint in arms transfers on a unilateral, bilateral or multilateral basis.

2. The General Assembly, by its resolution 46/36 L of 9 December 1991, entitled "Transparency in armaments", requested the Secretary-General to establish and maintain at United Nations Headquarters a universal and non-discriminatory Register of Conventional Arms and set out the arrangements for the consideration of its development. The Assembly called upon all Member States to provide annually for the Register data on imports and exports of conventional arms in the seven categories covered under the Register, and, pending the expansion of the Register, invited them also to provide to the Secretary-General, with their annual report on imports and exports of arms, available background information regarding their military holdings, procurement through national production and relevant policies, and requested the Secretary-General to record that material and to make it available for consultation by Member States at their request.

3. In the same resolution, the General Assembly reiterated its conviction that arms transfers in all their aspects deserved serious consideration by the international community, inter alia, because of: (a) their potential effects in further destabilizing areas where tension and regional conflict threaten international peace and security as well as national security; (b) their potentially negative effects on the progress of the peaceful social and economic development of all peoples; and (c) the danger of increasing illicit and covert arms trafficking. It called upon Member States to exercise due restraint in exports and imports of conventional arms, particularly in situations of tension or conflict, and to ensure that they have in place an adequate body of laws and administrative procedures regarding the transfer of arms and to adopt strict measures for their enforcement.

4. The General Assembly furthermore declared its determination to prevent the excessive and destabilizing accumulations of arms, including conventional arms, in order to promote stability and strengthen regional or international peace and security, taking into account the legitimate security needs of States and the principle of undiminished security at the lowest possible level of armaments. It also reaffirmed the inherent right to individual and collective self-defence recognized in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.

B. Developments since 1991

1992 Panel

5. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/36 L, the Secretary-General convened a panel of governmental technical experts in 1992. The tasks of the Panel were to assist the Secretary-General:

(a) To elaborate the technical procedures and to make any adjustments to the annex to resolution 46/36 L necessary for the effective operation of the Register;

(b) To prepare a report on the modalities for early expansion of the scope of the Register by the addition of further categories of equipment and the inclusion of data on military holdings and procurement through national production.

6. The General Assembly, by its resolution 47/52 L of 15 December 1992, entitled "Transparency in armaments", endorsed the report of the Secretary-General containing the recommendations of the Panel (A/47/342), called upon all Member States to provide the requested data and information to the Secretary-General by 30 April annually, beginning in 1993, and encouraged Member States to inform the Secretary-General of their national arms import and export policies, legislation and administrative procedures, both as regards authorization of arms transfers and prevention of illicit transfers, in conformity with paragraph 18 of its resolution 46/36 L. Subsequent resolutions of the General Assembly reiterated that request. The Panel also recommended that the consolidated annual report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on the data registered and the available background information submitted by Member States be open to the public.

1994 Group of Governmental Experts

7. In accordance with General Assembly resolutions 46/36 L, 47/52 L and 48/75 E of 16 December 1993, the 1994 Group of Governmental Experts was established to report on the continuing operation of the Register and its further development. The Assembly, in its resolution 49/75 C of 15 December 1994, took note of the report of the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Group (A/49/316). By the same resolution, the General Assembly decided to keep the scope of and participation in the Register under review and, to that end, requested Member States to provide the Secretary-General with their views on the continuing operation of the Register and its further development and on transparency measures related to weapons of mass destruction.

1997 Group of Governmental Experts

8. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 51/45 H of 10 December 1996, entitled "Transparency in armaments", the 1997 Group of Governmental Experts was established to prepare a report on the continuing operation of the Register and its further development, with a view to a decision at the fifty-second session of the Assembly. By its resolution 52/38 R of 9 December 1997, entitled "Transparency in armaments", the General Assembly took note of the report of the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Group of Experts (A/52/316) and endorsed the recommendations of the report. The Assembly also decided to keep the scope of and participation in the Register under review and to that end, requested Member States to provide their views to the Secretary-General on the continuing

operation and further development of the Register. In addition, it requested the Secretary-General, with the assistance of a group of governmental experts to be convened in 2000 on the basis of equitable geographical representation, to prepare a report on the continuing operation of the Register and its further development, with a view to a decision at its fifty-fifth session.

9. The General Assembly also adopted resolution 52/38 B of 9 December 1997, entitled "Transparency in armaments", in which it took note of the reports of the Secretary-General on transparency in armaments (A/52/312 and Corr.1 and 2 and Add.1 and 2, and A/52/316) and requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States on ways and means of enhancing transparency in the fields of weapons of mass destruction and transfers of equipment and technologies directly related to the development and manufacture of such weapons with a view to enhancing transparency in the field of conventional weapons.

2000 Group of Governmental Experts

10. By its resolution 54/54 O of 1 December 1999, entitled "Transparency in armaments", the General Assembly recalled its request to the Secretary-General, with the assistance of a group of governmental experts to be convened in 2000, on the basis of equitable geographical representation, to prepare a report on the continuing operation of the Register and its further development, taking into account the work of the Conference on Disarmament, the views expressed by Member States and his reports on the continuing operation of the Register and its further development, with a view to a decision at its fifty-fifth session. The Assembly also requested Member States to provide the Secretary-General with their views on the continuing operation of the Register and its further development and on transparency measures related to weapons of mass destruction.

11. By its resolution 54/54 I of 1 December 1999, entitled "Transparency in armaments", the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, with the assistance of the Group of Governmental Experts to be convened in 2000 and taking into account the views submitted by Member States, to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session on:

(a) The early expansion of the scope of the Register; and

(b) The elaboration of practical means for the development of the Register in order to increase transparency related to weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, and to transfers of equipment and technology directly related to the development and manufacture of such weapons.

12. The Group of Governmental Experts considered the reports of the 1994 and 1997 groups of governmental experts on the continuing operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and its further development, as well as related resolutions of the General Assembly.

13. The Group took note of the guidelines and recommendations for objective information on military matters, adopted by the United Nations Disarmament Commission in 1992,[1] in which it was observed that, while the Register should be operated and further developed on the basis of relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, States should in the meantime take practical measures, on the basis of existing agreements, where applicable, and within appropriate forums, to increase openness and transparency in military matters through the provision of objective

information, including nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction, the transfer of high technology with military applications, imports and exports of conventional arms, military holdings, procurement through national production and relevant policies.

14. The Group also took note of the report of the Disarmament Commission adopted in 1996, which contains "Guidelines for international arms transfers in the context of General Assembly resolution 46/36 H of 6 December 1991",[2] as well as the report of the Disarmament Commission adopted in 1999, which contains "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/4 N".[3]

15. The Group noted that in the guidelines for international arms transfers adopted by the Disarmament Commission in 1996, it was observed that arms transfers should be addressed in conjunction with the question of maintaining international peace and security, reducing regional and international tensions, preventing and resolving conflicts and disputes, building and enhancing confidence, and promoting disarmament as well as social and economic development. Restraint and greater openness, including various transparency measures, could help in this respect and contribute to the promotion of international peace and security. It was also observed that the United Nations, in keeping with its overall purposes and principles, had a legitimate interest in the field of arms transfers, recognized by the Charter of the United Nations, which referred specifically to the importance of the regulation of armaments for the maintenance of international peace and security. The report further observed that transparency measures concerning arms transfers were not in themselves measures of limitation or restriction, but they could in several ways promote and facilitate the introduction of unilateral or multilateral measures of restraint as well as help in the detection of arms transferred illegally. Among other things, States should respect the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, including the right of self-defence; Members should refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State; international arms transfers should not be used as a means to interfere in the internal affairs of other States; and disputes should be settled by peaceful means.

16. The Group also took into account the views of Member States given in response to previous General Assembly resolutions on transparency in armaments.[4] It also took note of the 1998 and 1999 reports of the Conference on Disarmament[5] as well as the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, transmitted to the General Assembly by the Secretary-General in his note dated 19 August 1999 (A/54/258), and the report of the Group of Experts on the problem of ammunition and explosives (A/54/155), submitted to the Assembly on 29 June 1999.

17. The Group reviewed the developments that have taken place in arms transparency, including specific issues, in the context of the current global and regional security situation since the inception of the Register in 1992. In view of the scarcity and limited nature of global arrangements devoted to conventional weapons, it was observed that efforts should be made to improve and further develop the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, which was among only a few global instruments on arms transparency. The Group also observed with satisfaction that the Register had established a norm of transparency and that it had stimulated many

Governments to streamline their national systems for monitoring and regulating arms transfer. The Group stressed that submissions by Member States to the Register provide a significant amount of official information which otherwise would not have been available, and that this information provided a basis for regional and international consultations between Governments.

18. The Group reaffirmed the role of the Register as a confidence-building measure designed to improve security among States and recalled that the General Assembly, by its resolution 46/36 L, had considered that an enhanced level of transparency in armaments could contribute to confidence-building and security among States. The establishment of the Register, as part of a broader range of international efforts to promote transparency in military matters, was a step in that direction and could help to prevent an excessive and destabilizing accumulation of arms, in particular as it covered weapon systems that could be used for offensive operations. In that regard, the Register was an important tool involving transparency and confidence which had the potential of contributing to the easing of tensions and of restraint in arms transfers. The Group also noted that the Register could contribute to enhancing confidence, easing tensions, strengthening regional and international peace and security, and contribute to restraint in military production and the transfer of arms, taking into account the legitimate security needs of States and the principle of undiminished security at the lowest possible level of armaments. In that regard, the Group stressed that further efforts were needed towards achieving the above-mentioned objectives.

19. In considering the development of the Register, the Group took full account of the relationship between transparency and the security needs of States. It reaffirmed that participation in the Register, which was voluntary, was a means by which States could signal their preparedness to enter into dialogue with other States on this aspect of security policy. That can provide a valuable input into bilateral and regional dialogues on security concerns and the evolution of a more cooperative approach to security. In that context, the Group recalled that transparency was not an end in itself, nor was the Register a control mechanism, but rather a confidence-building measure designed to improve security relations among States.

20. Taking into account the views submitted by Member States to the Secretary-General, as called for in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, and those raised in its discussions, the Group observed that, notwithstanding that the Register dealt with conventional weapons, the principle of transparency could also apply, in conjunction with other measures, to weapons of mass destruction and to transfers of high technology with military applications, as reflected in the provisions of various relevant legal instruments and in the founding resolution 46/36 L.

II. Review of the operation of the Register

A. General

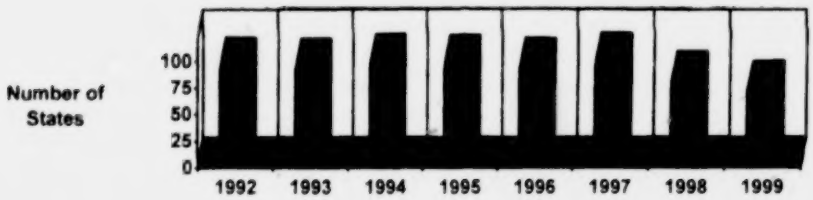
21. In the course of its deliberations, the Group had at its disposal the data and information submitted by Governments for the Register by 4 August 2000 for the calendar years 1992 to 1999 inclusive.[6] The Group also had before it the views of Member States on the operation of the Register, submitted in response to General Assembly resolution 46/36 L and subsequent resolutions. In the light of those data

and information, the Group reviewed the operation of the Register with a view to making recommendations for enhancing its operation and further development.

B. Extent of participation

22. The Group noted that, with the exception of 1998, in each calendar year of the operation of the Register, over 90 Governments had submitted reports on arms transfers. The number of Governments submitting reports for the calendar years 1992-1999 is indicated in figure 1.[7]

Figure 1
Extent of Participation by States

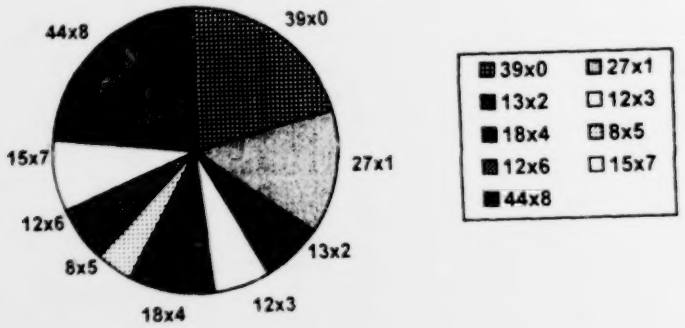


23. The Group was encouraged to note that the level of participation remained one of the highest compared with similar international reporting instruments, such as the United Nations system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures. But it also noted that overall participation was lower in calendar year 1998 than in previous years. In that regard, the Group noted that of the Governments which did not make a submission in 1998, but did so in the previous year, most had submitted a "nil" report. The Group also observed that the Register had entered a consolidation phase, requiring continued efforts to build upon the quantitative and qualitative achievements made so far, and to achieve the goal of universal participation.

24. Not all Governments that had submitted reports had participated consistently each year. The Group took account of the fact that, to date, a total of 149 Governments, including 146 Member States, had participated in the Register at least once by reporting either a "nil" transfer or an actual transfer.

25. Of the eight years of operation of the Register, 44 Governments had participated consistently, while 27 Governments had reported only once, and 39 had never submitted a report. The frequency of reporting by States is shown in figure 2. The graph indicates the number of times a country has reported to the Register since 1992. For example, 15 States reported seven times to the Register, while 27 States reported once to the Register.

Figure 2
Submission by States during calendar years 1992-1999



26. The Group noted that of the States that had participated in the Register one or more times, a varying number had not reported consistently in each calendar year. However, transfers involving some of the States not participating in a given year are reported on in returns submitted by those participating in that year. Although 57 States that had participated one or more times in previous years did not participate in calendar year 1996, 8 of those States were reported upon in returns by participating States in that year. Similarly, in 1997, there were 51 such States, of which transfers involving 7 were reported. In 1998, there were 67 such States, of which transfers involving 13 were reported.

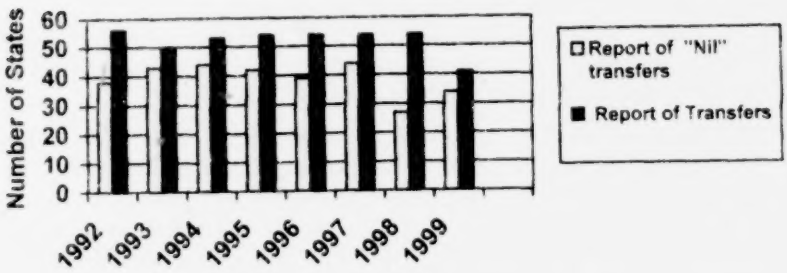
27. Of the Member States that had never submitted reports, there were at least 10 States each year, on average, which were reported upon by other Member States as either an importer or an exporter, reaching a high point of 14 States in calendar year 1997. Related to this is the number of Member States which had never submitted reports and had never been reported upon by other States. The Group noted that the total number of such States was less than 25. This relatively low figure implies that, while a total of 146 Member States have participated in the Register so far, more than 160 States have been reported upon by other States as either an importer or exporter.

28. On the quantitative side, the Group observed that, in addition to the number of States participating each year, account should be taken of the overall coverage of arms transfers provided by the Register. In that regard, it was noted that the total number of States involved in arms transfers covered by the Register in any given calendar year would be substantially greater than the number of participating States in that year, since there were States that had never participated in the Register but had been mentioned by those submitting returns. Similarly, there were States that had not participated in a particular calendar year but had been mentioned in submissions by other States. Thus, for example, while 82 States participated in calendar year 1998, the Register covered references to a total of 106 States, of which 11 had never participated in the Register and 13 had participated at least once in the preceding period. On this basis, the total number for calendar year 1998 amounts to 119.

29. On the qualitative side, it was observed that the Register covered the great bulk of arms trade in the seven categories of conventional weapons, as almost all the significant suppliers and recipients of such weapons submitted reports regularly.

30. Taking account of the need to enhance the utility of the Register, it was observed that the goal of universal participation had not yet been reached. While there was a levelling off in the pattern of incremental growth of overall participation in the Register in calendar year 1998, the Group took note of the factors that might account for the lack of universal participation on arms transfers so far. In some cases, States not reporting did not possess equipment or engage in transfers of equipment covered by the seven categories in the Register. In such cases, the importance of submitting "nil" reports was emphasized; otherwise it would not be clear whether transfers had taken place. Nevertheless, it was noted that many States that had neither imported nor exported equipment covered by the Register had submitted "nil" reports, with the partial exception of calendar year 1998. The Group also noted that the number of States reporting transfers had remained relatively stable through the years. The number of Governments submitting "nil" reports for both imports and exports, together with the number of Governments submitting data on arms transfers, is provided in figure 3.

Figure 3
Reporting of Transfers vs. "Nil" reporting

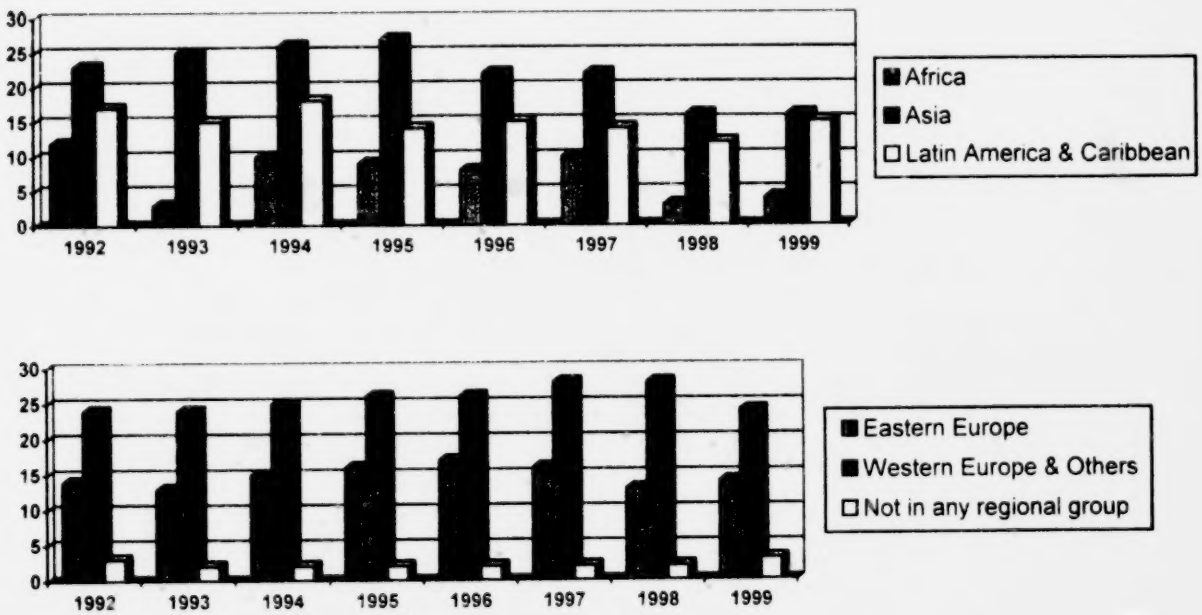


31. There remained, however, a number of States that had not yet participated in the Register by submitting a "nil" report. Their participation, it was emphasized, was important, both for making progress towards the goal of universal participation as well as for expanding the geographical boundaries of confidence-building through transparency. Similarly, it was observed that some States that had been submitting "nil" reports had not been consistent in their participation. For the sustained growth in the level of participation, it was also important that "nil" reports, where appropriate, were submitted, since a substantial number of Governments could be expected to fall in this category in any calendar year, as has been the case since the inception of the Register in 1992. For example, there were 24 States that did not participate in calendar year 1998 but did so in calendar year 1997. Of those, 21 had submitted "nil" reports. The Group also noted that a substantial percentage of participating States had submitted "nil" reports in each of the seven calendar years. In 1998, the percentage recorded was nearly 21, which was the lowest for the period 1992-1998. In all other years, more than 35 per cent had

submitted "nil" reports, with a high of over 41 per cent for calendar years 1994 and 1997. For calendar year 1999, 31 States had submitted "nil" reports out of a total of the 78 States that had submitted a return as of 4 August 2000.

32. It was noted that the level of reporting varied from region to region and that that pattern remained consistent throughout the reporting years. In that regard, it was also observed that the level of participation within regions was not consistent for all the regions in calendar year 1998. Participation by region, based on a United Nations list of regional groups,[8] is provided in figure 4.

Figure 4
Participation by Governments according to region for calendar years 1992-1999



33. It should be noted that the data in figure 4 represent Member States only. Thus, the submissions of the Governments of Switzerland (an observer State), Cook Islands, Niue as well as Kiribati (which is now a Member State) are not included. In all other figures and tables they are included.

34. Additional data on participation by region, showing ratios within regions, are provided in table 1.

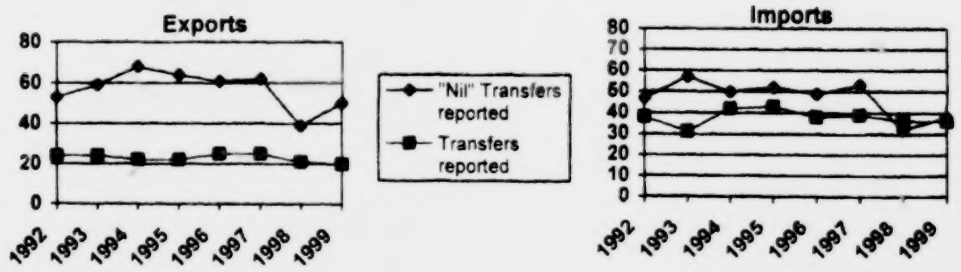
Table 1
Regional participation

Region	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*	*1995*	*1996*	*1997*	*1998*	*1999 As of 4 August 2000*
Africa	12 of 51	3 of 52	10 of 53	9 of 53	8 of 53	10 of 53	3 of 53	4 of 53
Asia	23 of 47	25 of 47	26 of 48	27 of 48	22 of 48	22 of 48	16 of 48	16 of 48
Eastern Europe	14 of 19	13 of 20	15 of 21	16 of 21	17 of 21	16 of 21	13 of 21	14 of 21
Latin America and the Caribbean	17 of 33	15 of 33	18 of 33	14 of 33	15 of 33	14 of 33	12 of 33	15 of 33
Western Europe and others	24 of 24	24 of 27	25 of 27	26 of 27	26 of 27	28 of 28	28 of 28	24 of 28
Not in any regional group	3 of 5	2 of 5	2 of 3	2 of 3	2 of 3	2 of 3	2 of 3	2 of 3

C. Reports on exports and imports

35. The Group observed that the number of States reporting exports and imports remained relatively stable throughout the period under review. The number of Governments reporting, including those which submitted "nil" reports on exports or imports, in the years 1992-1999 is indicated in figure 5 below.

Figure 5
Government reports on imports and exports

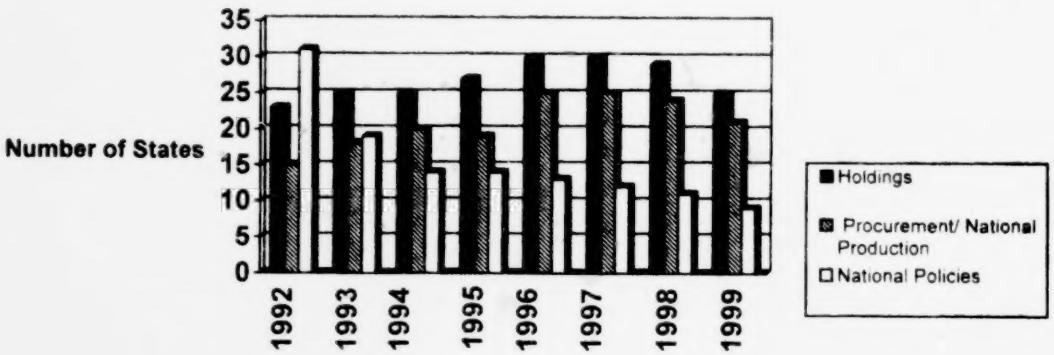


36. It was noted that a number of States, reported upon as an exporter or importer by participating States, did not make any report for the Register. On average, 11 States fell into that category. For calendar years 1996-1998, the figure varied from a low of 7 to a high of 14; they were not the same States in every year.

D. Reports on additional background information

37. The number of States reporting additional background information, in accordance with paragraph 10 of resolution 46/36 L, has increased over the first seven years of reporting with regard to information on procurement through national production and military holdings. Under the terms of the resolution, States are invited (rather than called upon, which is the case for arms transfers) to provide such information. They can submit the information in any form that they wish. With very few exceptions, participating States reported on the seven categories covered by the Register, providing information on procurement through national production and military holdings. A total of 47 Governments submitted reports on their military holdings during the calendar years 1992-1998, of which a large number have reported regularly, while a total of 29 Governments submitted reports regarding their procurement through national production during the period, of which a large number have reported regularly. Of the Governments that reported during the calendar years 1992-1998, on average, seven reported on weapons not within the categories covered by the Register. The Group observed that many States had reported national policies only once and thereafter had reported only changes or additions as they occurred. The overall pattern of reporting of available background information is provided in figure 6.

Figure 6
Holdings, procurement and national policies



E. Assessment of reporting

38. In reviewing the first seven calendar years of the operation of the Register, the Group welcomed the continuing commitment of States reporting to the Register on a regular basis. Continuity of reporting was important not only to preserve the relevance of the Register, but also to provide a basis for any analysis of trends over time. The Group considered that non-participation by States might be for political and bureaucratic reasons. Also, some States might not have been convinced that the Register alone was relevant to their security concerns. In other cases, the existing scope and parameters of the Register could be a reason for non-participation. Additional reasons for non-participation may be a lack of resources or awareness of the operation of the Register. It was also noted that in some cases armed conflict, severe political crises or other negative developments in the international security situation might have hampered reporting.

39. The Group considered, however, that gaining wider participation in the Register was of high importance. As indicated above, over 90 Governments reported to the Register for each of the calendar years 1992 to 1997 inclusive. In calendar year 1998, the number was 82. Nevertheless, for all the calendar years, the information provided by both exporters and importers covered the bulk of the global trade in the seven existing categories of the Register. While this level of reporting is higher than other comparable reporting instruments, consistent reporting by Governments that have not engaged in arms transfers in a calendar year would substantially raise the overall level of participation. Greater awareness of the function of the Register and familiarity with its procedures, it was observed, could also facilitate increased participation. Universality of participation would greatly enhance the value of the Register as a confidence-building measure. Furthermore, failure to report one side of a transfer created uncertainty about the accuracy of that data, which wider participation would serve to reduce.

40. It was observed that, as shown by the analysis of data on the reporting pattern since 1992, a large proportion of non-participating States are likely to fall in the category of potential "nil" reporters. The Group reaffirmed the value of participation by the submission of "nil" reports since such reports helped to complete the overall picture of arms transfers and are a valuable form of participation in the confidence-building process provided by the Register. The Group believed that every effort should be made to encourage States to participate in the Register by submitting a "nil" report if they have neither imported nor exported equipment in the Register categories during the calendar year subject to reporting.

41. The Group observed that the extension of the deadline for submitting returns from 30 April to 31 May each year, which had been adopted since 1998, following the recommendation contained in the 1997 report of the Group of Governmental Experts, was widely welcomed by Governments, as a number of them had found it difficult to submit their reports by the previous due date, because of their particular situations. Nevertheless, the Group considered it important that States report promptly in order to enable the annual consolidated report on the Register to be prepared as soon as possible after the due date and in good time for consideration by the General Assembly. Prompt reporting would also enhance transparency by shortening the time lag in making such data available to all Member States.

42. In analysing reporting by Governments, the Group noted significant variations among regions. These variations follow a consistent pattern, which could be related to the reasons mentioned in paragraph 38 above. Changes in regional or subregional situations in a particular calendar year may also play a role in the pattern of reporting from regions.

43. The Group observed that mismatches continued to occur on details of transfers, such as the number of items transferred, the date of the transfer and the type of equipment. It considered that an important reason for some of those discrepancies could be the lack of a common definition of a transfer. This led to differing interpretations not only of whether a transfer had taken place, but also of the timing of a transfer. National practices continue to differ and sometimes a transfer is reported in different years, leading to the mismatch in the Register. Agreement on a common definition is complicated by differing national practices regarding the implementation of rules, regulations and procedures for exports and imports. At present the description of a transfer, given in the report of the 1992 Panel and reaffirmed by the 1994 and 1997 groups of governmental experts, remains the guideline for reporting transfers. The Group also believed that among the reasons for discrepancies in reporting of transfers was a lack of knowledge and understanding of the Register and its procedures, and limited availability of resources for implementing the Register.

44. The Group observed that the number of participating States using the "Remarks" column in the reporting format to provide designations and descriptions of equipment transferred had increased over the seven years of reporting. The "Remarks" column was designed by the 1992 Panel to aid the understanding of international transfers by providing the opportunity, if States so wished, to report the designation, type or model of the equipment being transferred. The 1992 Panel also suggested that the column could also be used to provide additional clarification of transfers, such as if the equipment were obsolete or the result of co-production. The number of Governments using the "Remarks" column to indicate types and models in reporting exports and imports is detailed in table 2.

Table 2
Frequency of "Remarks" column use

	1992	*1993*	*1994*	*1995*	*1996*	*1997*	*1998*	*1999 as of 4 August 2000*
Exporters	15 of 24	16 of 24	17 of 22	19 of 22	23 of 25	26 of 26	22 of 23	19 of 20
Importers	26 of 38	24 of 31	34 of 42	35 of 43	32 of 36	37 of 40	41 of 41	36 of 36

45. The Group reaffirmed the view that use of the "Remarks" column helped in gaining an understanding of the data provided, and in identifying or reducing discrepancies, thereby adding considerable value to the Register. Information on models and types of equipment not only aided clarity but also provided an important qualitative element to reporting. The Group therefore encouraged Governments to maximize their use of this column when reporting transfers.

46. With regard to reporting on available background information, the Group noted the increase in reporting, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/36 L, on military holdings and procurement through national production. It also noted that

the overwhelming majority of reports provided data on the seven categories of the Register. The Group took account of those voluntary practices and considered that continued dissemination of the information would be useful.

47. The Group also noted with satisfaction the improvements in reporting by States, such as the increasing use of the "Remarks" column, achieved on the basis of recommendations of the 1997 Group of Governmental Experts.

III. Development of the Register

A. General

48. By its resolution 46/36 L, the General Assembly initiated the process for future expansion of the scope of the Register by the addition of further categories of equipment and the inclusion of data on military holdings and procurement through national production. Modalities for such expansion were considered by the 1992 Panel, which presented its findings to the Assembly at its forty-seventh session. The question of further development of the Register was discussed extensively by the 1994 Group of Experts on the continuing operation of the Register and its further development, but no agreement was reached on any of the proposals put forward. The 1997 Group also examined various proposals to further develop the Register. It studied the definitions of the existing seven categories to ascertain whether they still met the purposes of the Register. Proposals and issues relating to weapons of mass destruction and the inclusion of small arms and light weapons were also considered. The 1997 Group studied the implications of the proposed technical adjustments but could not reach agreement on such adjustments.

49. The 2000 Group of Governmental Experts engaged in an extensive and detailed technical examination of the issue of adjustments to the seven categories of weapons covered by the Register. In that context, it also examined the concepts of force projection and force multiplier capabilities in the light of technological developments affecting the conduct of modern warfare.[9] The Group noted that, while in some cases those capabilities might not be offensive systems in themselves, they could add to the effectiveness of offensive systems. The issue of whether weapon systems could be described as offensive or defensive was also discussed more broadly and it was recognized that any distinctions must take into account differences in the military doctrines of States. In the context of force projection and force multiplier capabilities, the Group examined the question of whether this kind of adjustment would make the reporting procedure more complex and whether, in that respect, it might affect both the scope of the Register and the ultimate goal of universal participation. Bearing in mind the ultimate goal of universal participation as well as the further development of the Register, the Group discussed each of the existing categories separately to determine the desirability and feasibility of introducing adjustments. In addition, in the context of issues relating to the expansion of the scope of the Register, the Group considered the issue of including data on military holdings and procurement through national production. The Group also considered the question of the interrelation of small arms and light weapons with the Register, as well as the issue of transparency in weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons.

B. Categories of weapons covered by the Register[10]

Category I. Battle tanks

50. The Group believed that the existing definition of battle tanks provided adequate coverage. In this regard, it was observed that the technological trend was towards the development of tanks of higher rather than lower tonnage and gun calibre.

Category II. Armoured combat vehicles

51. The Group analysed the current definition of category II and discussed the issue of adjustments covering reconnaissance and target acquisition systems, bridge-laying equipment, armoured recovery vehicles and electronic warfare systems. The question of light tanks was discussed, as such tanks, which potentially fall outside category I, could be examined within the framework of this category, which provided a broad conceptual scope for addressing tanks and other armoured vehicles not covered by the category I definition.

Category III. Large-calibre artillery systems

52. The Group recalled the discussion on adjustments under category III that had taken place in the 1994 and 1997 groups of governmental experts, and examined the relevance and significance of including artillery systems between the ranges of 35 and 100 mm, which fall outside the existing definition. For example, lowering the threshold to 75 mm would include 81 mm and 82 mm mortars, which have seen widespread use in some recent conflicts. The discussion of this issue enabled an analysis of measures to increase transparency in small arms and light weapons. In that regard, the Group took note of the United Nations Conference on Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its aspects, to be held in the year 2001.

Category IV. Combat aircraft

53. In category IV, the question of adjustments was discussed in relation to military aircraft, for example, the inclusion of force multipliers such as reconnaissance, command of troops, electronic warfare and force projection capabilities such as air-to-air refuelling and aircraft designed to perform troop transport and airdrop missions. In that regard, the Group also discussed the question of coverage of systems in the context of their combat role in large-scale offensive operations and surprise attacks. The Group also considered whether the existing definition failed to capture all military aircraft performing specialized electronic warfare, suppression of air defence and reconnaissance missions by only covering "versions of combat aircraft". Similar consideration on this final point was also given under category V.

Category V. Attack helicopters

54. In category V, as in the case of some other categories, the Group examined the question of adjustments in relation to significant combat support systems, for example, target acquisition (including anti-submarine warfare), communications, command of troops, electronic warfare, mine-laying and transport helicopters. In that regard, as in relation to category IV, the Group discussed the implications of making technical adjustments that might require rephrasing the category title or

creating a new category. The technical discussion also generated views regarding the possible parameters of military transport helicopters, including its lift capacity, in order to provide a clear definition for reporting purposes.

Category VI. Warships

55. The discussion on possible adjustments to category VI revolved around the issue of lowering the tonnage of surface warships, and the Group discussed the implications of a possible lowering of the threshold to 400 metric tons, which would include, for example, mine-laying and amphibious vessels. Similarly, the Group considered other developments, such as the firepower of vessels falling below the existing threshold of 750 metric tons, which in some cases were comparable to those possessed by larger vessels. The question was raised as to whether such vessels could be regarded as being potentially destabilizing. The Group also took note of vessels operated by coast guards that are meant for domestic law enforcement, and other vessels that have a coastal patrol role or are devoted to coastal defence.

56. The analysis by the Group extended to the issue of military significance in the context of the Register, that is to say, whether consideration of vessels for possible inclusion in category VI should be confined to those with a "blue water" capability or should cover also other warships that might be significant in a regional context. In that regard, views were exchanged on the issue of the defensive and offensive role of some classes of surface warships, in particular mine-laying/sweeping vessels.

Category VII. Missiles and missile launchers

57. In category VII, the main focus of consideration was the issue of man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS) and the question of transparency in international transfers involving such systems. In that regard, the Group examined in detail the question as to whether missiles of less than 25 km range, particularly surface-to-air systems, were defensive or offensive weapons, and whether they could be deemed to fall outside the scope of the Register. Similarly, it examined the interrelation between MANPADS and the question of small arms and light weapons. In that context, the specific role of the Register in promoting transparency, in contrast to reduction and limitation measures envisaged in arms control instruments, was discussed.

C. Expansion of the scope of the Register

58. In connection with adjustments to the seven categories of the Register, the question of combat support and combat service support capabilities[11] frequently arose during the discussion. The issue was thus examined from conceptual and methodological standpoints. Conceptually, for example, combat support and combat service support systems could be addressed separately by adding two new categories, or the existing seven categories could be subdivided to cover combat, combat support and combat service support systems, respectively. In the context of force projection and force multiplier capabilities, the Group examined the question as to whether this kind of adjustment would make the reporting procedure more complex and whether, in this respect, it might affect both the scope of the Register and the ultimate goal of universal participation.

59. The Group discussed the issue of expanding the scope of the Register to include data on military holdings and procurement through national production on the same basis as data on transfers. In particular, it addressed the question of whether such an expansion would promote greater participation in the Register. A proposal was made to work towards expansion with data on procurement through national production, which could fulfil the objective of making the Register more balanced and provide greater transparency. A proposal was also made for transparency in international transfers of military technology.

60. The Group addressed the issue of weapons of mass destruction. In that connection, proposals were made for transparency in nuclear weapons, including bombers and other delivery systems, weapons-grade material and production facilities, as well as for a review of the Register with the aim of including weapons of mass destruction.

IV. Regional aspects

A. Overview

61. In resolution 46/36 L and subsequent resolutions, the General Assembly called upon Member States to cooperate at regional and subregional levels, taking fully into account the specific conditions prevailing in the regions or subregions, with a view to enhancing and coordinating international efforts aimed at increased openness and transparency in armaments.

62. The Group noted variations in the pattern of reporting among the regions. It welcomed the efforts made by regional organizations and arrangements, individual Member States and the United Nations Secretariat to promote participation in the Register. It expressed the belief that this effort should be sustained in order to help achieve the goal of universal participation in the Register. The Group took account of the different security conditions, recognizing that complementary confidence-building and security-building measures and other work to enhance security should take account of specific concerns and security perceptions. In that context, it noted that other measures related to weapons and equipment not covered by the categories in the Register had particular importance in certain regions in ensuring that the whole spectrum of security concerns was taken into account, in particular in those regions in which the threat of armed conflict still existed. The Group also noted that in certain instances the Register had a beneficial influence in stimulating activities in relation to confidence-building measures and discussions on regional security.

B. Support of the Register through regional arrangements and agencies

Asia and the Pacific

63. In the region of Asia and the Pacific, the overall level of participation continues to be relatively modest since the inception of the Register, as can be observed from the data provided in table 1. The highest level of participation was recorded for calendar year 1995 at 56 per cent, while the lowest level was 33 per

cent for 1998. A large proportion of non-participating States or States which have not participated consistently are those that would be likely to return a "nil" report.

64. Participation in some subregions, particularly in areas of tension, has been markedly low, affecting the level of overall participation. In this regard, with the aim of achieving universal participation in the Register, the Group stressed the importance of taking into account all the principles contained in the Charter of the United Nations as well as the guidelines for international arms transfers referred to in paragraph 15 of the present report. The Group also took note of the action taken by the General Assembly relevant to the regional context. In resolutions 54/59 of 1 December 1999 and 51/50 of 10 December 1996 on strengthening security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region, the Assembly encouraged all States of the region to favour the necessary conditions for strengthening the confidence-building measures among them by promoting genuine openness and transparency on all military matters by, inter alia, providing accurate data and information to the Register. Similar encouragement was expressed by the Assembly in its resolutions 49/81 of 15 December 1994 and 50/75 of 12 December 1995.

65. From the time of its establishment in 1994, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum (ARF) has been making efforts for the eventual participation by all ARF countries in the Register. An important step in support of the Register was the 1996 decision at the Foreign Ministers meeting to endorse the recommendations of the Inter-Sessional Group on Confidence Building Measures that ARF participants should be encouraged on a voluntary basis to circulate the data submitted to the Register at the same time to other ARF countries. Ministers also endorsed the recommendations that discussions on the Register within the ARF framework should be continued, with a view to enhancing security in the region, and that ARF participants should be encouraged to work together within the United Nations to promote more global participation in the Register. In support of those recommendations, active efforts are under way to explore issues related to participation in the Register and identify possible cooperation among ARF countries.

The Americas

66. Overall participation from Latin America and the Caribbean has been relatively modest since the inception of the Register. The level of participation registered a high of nearly 55 per cent in calendar year 1994 and a low of 36 per cent in 1998. A large proportion of non-participating States or States which have not participated consistently are those that would be likely to return a "nil" report. Bureaucratic reasons have been a major factor for the modest level of participation. However, significant developments in the region in the area of arms transparency are likely to facilitate a higher level of overall participation.

67. On 7 June 1999, following two years of intensive consultations, the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) adopted the landmark Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions.[12] The Convention puts in place a concrete mechanism for strengthening regional stability through confidence-building and transparency. It requires States parties to provide annual reports to the OAS depositary on its imports and exports of conventional weapons covered by the Convention, which are identical to those covered by the United Nations Register. States parties are also

required to notify the depositary of its acquisitions of conventional weapons, whether through imports or national production, within 90 days of incorporation in the armed forces. States parties that have not acquired weapons are required to submit a "nil" return no later than 15 June of each year.

68. The Presidents of MERCOSUR (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay), Chile and Bolivia, at their meeting in Buenos Aires on 30 June 2000, reaffirmed the importance of confidence-building measures in the area of conventional armaments and made an appeal in favour of universal participation in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

Europe

69. Participation by the European States has been the highest among the regions of the world since the inception of the Register. In particular, participation by the countries of Western Europe in calendar years 1997 and 1998 was universal. Among Eastern European States, overall participation has been reasonably high as well as relatively stable, though not universal. There has been an average of approximately 80 per cent participation in recent years.

70. To strengthen confidence and security among its participating States, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has adopted a number of documents and other confidence- and security-building measures providing for increased transparency on matters related to conventional armaments. In November 1999, at the Istanbul Summit, OSCE adopted the Vienna Document 1999 of the Negotiations on Confidence- and Security-building Measures. The document integrates revisions to preceding versions and a new set of measures covering the following areas: exchange of military information, defence planning, risk reduction, military contacts and visits, prior notifications and observation of certain military activities, constraints on certain military activities, verification and compliance, and regional measures. In addition, the Global Exchange of Military Information (GEMI), adopted at the Budapest Summit in 1994, provides for an annual exchange of information on military holdings covering a range of conventional armaments, including those found in the United Nations Register (except category VII). By a decision of the OSCE Forum for Security Cooperation in December 1997, participating States also circulate annually among themselves their data and other background information as provided to the United Nations Register; this information may be reviewed and discussed annually as well as at the time of the Annual Implementation Assessment Meeting of the Forum, thus encouraging dialogue among participating States. In addition, following a decision by the OSCE Forum in December 1995, participating States provide information annually, in response to a questionnaire, on their policy and national practices for the export of conventional arms and related technology.

71. Members of the European Union (EU) and associated countries continued to promote adherence to the Register by encouraging all States Members of the United Nations to submit national data. In particular, they contacted States that had not submitted their return for a specific year, with the request to submit their return for that year. As a result of those contacts, EU members and associated countries reported a general willingness on the part of the large majority of such States to participate in the Register. In view of this stated willingness, the answer to why a

number of these States still do not report to the Register might be found in the observations made by the Group on this issue (see para. 38 above).

Africa

72. Overall participation in the Register by the African States has been the lowest among the regions of the world. It has fluctuated during the calendar years 1992-1998, starting with a high of nearly 24 per cent participation in 1992 and dropping to a low of less than 6 per cent in 1998. A large proportion of non-participating States or States which have not participated consistently are those that would be likely to return a "nil" report.

73. At a subregional conference in N'Djamena, held in October 1999, the United Nations Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa adopted the N'Djamena Declaration (A/54/530), which called for the creation of a uniform weapons register at the national and subregional levels and urged all States to give effect to the recommendations contained in the guidelines for international arms transfers in the context of General Assembly resolution 46/36 H of 6 December 1991.

74. The Expert Group considered the issue of the relevance of the Register in the regional and subregional context. In that context, the technical examination of possible adjustments to the seven existing categories of the Register included, in some cases, consideration of weapon systems falling within the broad spectrum of small arms and light weapons, which have received a greater focus of attention in Africa in recent years. This is reflected, for example, in the arms transparency initiative of the 16-nation Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) as well as other initiatives which are being considered within the framework of the Organization of African Unity.[13]

C. Enhancing implementation at the regional level

75. The Group felt that regional and subregional efforts should be encouraged, as they may pave the way towards a higher degree of openness, confidence and transparency in a region, thereby promoting greater participation in the Register. The Group also believed that such efforts should complement, and not detract from, the operation of the universal and global Register. In that context, the Group believed that it was necessary to undertake further action to promote participation in the Register, since this global transparency instrument has been in operation for the last eight calendar years, and concentrated promotional efforts had not taken place in recent years, as in the early years of the Register. In that regard, the Group recalled that workshops and seminars organized by the former Centre for Disarmament Affairs in different regions from 1993 to 1996 had played a significant role in enhancing awareness and promoting participation in the Register.

76. The Group also felt that promotional and familiarization efforts should be focused, in particular, on those regions or subregions where such efforts are likely to overcome non-participation or inconsistent participation by States. With regard to promoting participation in the Register, the Group noted that a number of States had engaged in multilateral, regional or bilateral efforts to that end. In addition, the Group noted that some Governments had expressed interest in offering assistance to

promote the Register at appropriate regional or subregional levels, and that some events were in the process of being organized.[14]

V. Implementation of the Register

A. Reporting methods

77. The Group observed that, for many States, national policies of relevance to the Register might not change every year. To add clarity to reporting on national policies on submitting additional background information it was felt that it might be helpful if States indicated in their report either that there had been "no change" or, if applicable, the nature of the changes. Once a report had been submitted, any changes to national policies that States considered relevant to the Register should be reported. The Group also considered the significance of submitting "nil" returns, where appropriate, and noted that a number of States had used simplified reporting methods for submitting such returns.

B. Contacts among Member States

78. The Group believed that, in order to resolve possible discrepancies in the data submitted by exporters and importers as well as other issues relevant to the Register, direct bilateral contacts were important, as well as other contacts, where appropriate. To that end, the Group encouraged all Governments to appoint an official, national point of contact. Such points of contact could deal with queries arising from the national submissions with a view to resolving misunderstandings. In that regard, the Group noted that, to date, 46 Governments[15] had provided information to the Secretariat regarding their national point of contact. It also noted that other official channels of communication, where appropriate, could play a role in addressing issues relevant to the Register.

C. Access to data and information reported

79. In order to enhance the value of the Register as a tool to build confidence in security matters, Member States must be assured of the widest possible access by Member States to the data and information stored in the Register database. This could be achieved in a number of ways, including the use of electronic means, as appropriate. In that regard, the Group discussed a number of ideas for enhancing the use of electronic means in the maintenance and universalization of the Register, including the following: a separate and well-designed home page for the Register in the Secretariat web site on disarmament matters, with links to other arms transparency instruments and databases; making national submissions to the Register available electronically through a user-friendly database with a searchable facility; inclusion of the updated United Nations information booklet on the Register in the proposed Register home page; and dissemination of publicity material prepared by the Department for Disarmament Affairs, particularly to inform national Governments of the relevance of the Register as a confidence-building measure. The Group also considered the possibility of electronic filing of national submissions to the Register.

D. Role of the United Nations Secretariat

80. The Group noted the importance of the role of the Secretariat in giving advice to Member States, when requested, on technical aspects of completing reports to the Register and in clarifying technical ambiguities in reports submitted. To enhance participation, timely reporting to the Register as well as timely preparation of the annual consolidated report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly, the Group believed that it was important that the Secretariat play a role in promoting awareness of the Register and the procedures for reporting. In that regard, the Group considered a proposal for organizing annual workshops or consultative meetings on the Register prior to the deliberations in the First Committee or during the early stages of the session of the Committee.

81. The Group expressed appreciation of the role of the Department for Disarmament Affairs in disseminating useful information and educational material relating to the Register. In that regard, it commended the Department for publishing the United Nations information booklet on the Register and encouraged a regular update of the booklet.

82. The Group commended the Department for Disarmament Affairs for co-sponsoring a South Asia regional conference in Sri Lanka in June 2000, at which issues related to the Register were discussed. Focusing on the theme "Countering Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation in South Asia", the conference was hosted by the Colombo-based Regional Centre for Strategic Studies and also sponsored by Bradford University, United Kingdom.[16] The Group observed that the Department for Disarmament Affairs could facilitate the further holding of workshops and seminars at the regional and subregional levels with a view to achieving greater participation and enhancing familiarity with the Register and its procedures. The Group noted that the United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament had a significant role to play in the process.

E. Future review of the Register

83. The Group stressed the importance of periodic reviews of the continuing operation of the Register and its further development. It recalled its observation noted above that the Register had entered a phase where renewed efforts were needed to ensure that it moved forward towards the goal of universal participation and its further development. The Group recommended that the practice of holding periodic reviews should be continued. It also noted that, by 2002, the Register would have completed 10 years of operation, representing a significant achievement which could provide an opportunity to take stock of its operation and address the future development of the Register.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

84. The Group concluded that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms had made significant progress since its inception in 1992 and that it was entering a period of consolidation, requiring renewed efforts to ensure progress towards

universal participation as well as its further development. It noted that the Register had showed a consistent level of participation over the years and improved quality of information provided by States. Nevertheless, the Group observed that there were wide variations in the level of reporting among the regions, which called for additional targeted efforts at the regional and subregional levels to encourage wider participation.

85. While noting that a large number of States had reported to the Register at least once, the Group reaffirmed the importance of encouraging consistent participation in the Register and of submitting "nil" reports, where applicable, as that helped to provide as complete a picture as possible of the transactions in equipment covered by the Register. "Nil" reports, where applicable, would also help towards achieving the goal of universal participation, as the pattern of reporting since 1992 had shown that a significant number of States were likely to enter a "nil" report in any calendar year.

86. The Group expressed satisfaction with the increased use of the "Remarks" column, indicating designations, models or types of transferred equipment, and concluded that the reports containing such information added qualitatively to the data contained in the Register, thus enhancing its value as a confidence-building measure. It encouraged States to provide such information.

87. The Group stressed the importance of prompt reporting in order to facilitate early dissemination of the data and information for submission to the General Assembly. It concluded that the inclusion of a note verbale together with the reporting forms dispatched by the Secretariat to Member States by the end of January of each year would help to facilitate timely submission.

88. The Group encouraged Member States to provide their official point of contact to the Secretariat for onward dissemination to interested Member States. It concluded that a designated national point of contact could play a significant role in facilitating efficient reporting as well as clarifying issues that might be raised by the data submitted.

89. With regard to the further development of the Register, the Group discussed the question of including procurement through national production on the same basis as for transfers. It reaffirmed the goals of early expansion of the Register and welcomed the voluntary reporting by a number of States on military holdings and procurement through national production.

90. The Group recognized the importance of the principle of transparency and its relevance to weapons of mass destruction. In its consideration of proposals to add a new category to include such weapons, the Group reviewed the nature of the Register, regional security concerns and existing international legal instruments concerning the subject matter, as well as General Assembly resolution 46/36 L. In view of all these factors, particularly taking into account that the Register covered conventional arms only, the Group agreed that the question of transparency in weapons of mass destruction was an issue that should be addressed by the General Assembly.

91. The Group considered a number of adjustments to the existing seven categories, as follows:

- Under category II, the inclusion of armoured combat vehicles which performed reconnaissance, target acquisition, electronic warfare or command of troops, and in addition, battle tanks not covered by category I;
- Under category III, the lowering of the calibre threshold to 75 millimetres;
- Under category IV, the inclusion of aircraft designed or equipped to perform air-to-air refuelling, troop transport, air drop missions and electronic warfare. In addition, the inclusion of other military aircraft not covered by the existing definition;
- Under category V, the incorporation of helicopters designed or equipped to perform troop transport, combat support missions or electronic warfare. In addition, the inclusion of other military aircraft not covered by the existing definition;
- Under category VI, lowering the surface warship tonnage threshold to 400 tonnes;
- Under category VII, lowering the range of missiles to include systems below the present 25 kilometres range, in particular man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS).

As no agreement was reached on any of these adjustments, the Group decided that further consideration should be given to the matter in the next periodic review.

92. The question of the relationship between the existing categories and possible new categories of equipment of conventional arms, including light weapons and small arms, was discussed, as was the way that relationship could be of relevance to the purpose of the Register. The Group took note of the United Nations Conference on Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, to be held in 2001.

93. In order to facilitate universal participation as well as the continued development of the Register, as called for by the General Assembly in resolution 46/36 L and subsequent resolutions, the Group concluded that the review process, initiated at the time of establishment of the Register, should be continued. Such a review process was essential to the task of ensuring the continued progress of the Register.

B. Recommendations

94. The Group recommends that:

(a) Member States should participate in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms with a view to achieving the shared goal of universal participation in that instrument;

(b) Member States should be reminded of the importance of participating in the Register, both in reporting data and information and in making "nil" reports on imports and exports of conventional weapons covered by the Register;

(c) Member States in a position to do so should make use of the "Remarks" column in the standardized reporting form to provide additional data, such as types or models;

(d) Member States should be encouraged to report promptly in order to help ensure the early dissemination to Governments of the data and the information in the reports;

(e) Member States should nominate a national point of contact for matters connected with the Register and details on the contact point should be sent with the annual submission on the understanding that this information will be held by the Secretariat and provided on request to Governments only; furthermore, the Secretariat should maintain an updated list of national points of contact and circulate it to all Member States;

(f) The note verbale which the Secretariat sends annually to the Member States along with the standard reporting forms should also include an attachment for the filing of "nil" returns by States that do not have transfers to report. This attachment should read as follows: "The Government of ..., in reference to General Assembly resolution ..., confirms that it has neither exported nor imported any equipment in the seven categories of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms for the calendar year ... and therefore submits a 'nil' return." The text of the note verbale should accordingly contain a reference to the attached form for reporting "nil" returns;

(g) The Secretariat should assist Member States, as appropriate, in the implementation of agreed regional and subregional confidence-building measures;

(h) The General Assembly should decide on the appropriate time to conduct a full review of the continuing operation and further development of the Register at an early date;

(i) The General Assembly should consider a provision for additional resources to the Secretariat to operate and maintain the Register and to:

(i) Update the United Nations information booklet on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms on the basis of the present recommendations and distribute it among the Member States;

(ii) Send a note verbale, with the reporting forms, to Member States by the end of January and reminders, where appropriate, at the beginning of June;

(iii) Ensure that all information relating to the Register is electronically available as soon as possible. The updated United Nations information booklet on the Register should also be made available in the Register web site both as a hypertext linked series of pages and as a downloadable document. The Secretariat should continue to provide the General Assembly with the annual consolidated report of data and information registered, including that provided on a voluntary basis on military holdings and procurement through national production, together with an index of other additional background information. States providing data on military holdings and procurement through national production may request that these data not be published;

(iv) Ensure that all basic data and information relevant to the Register is available electronically in all official languages of the United Nations;

(v) Undertake a study with the assistance of a technical expert to determine the feasibility of electronic filing of national submissions to the Register;

(vi) Develop a separate home page for the Register, using a graphic design for efficient use of the Register data, and establish links between this home page and other comparable registers and data banks established by other international and regional organizations;

(vii) Send complete submissions to capitals and to all permanent missions to the United Nations in electronic form or hard copy, as appropriate;

(viii) Facilitate informal meetings relevant to the Register, such as briefings by the Secretariat on its operation and procedures, in parallel to the meetings of the First Committee;

(ix) Facilitate the holding of regional or subregional workshops and seminars, as appropriate, particularly to encourage greater participation.

Notes

[1] See Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 42 (A/47/42).

[2] Ibid., Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 42 (A/51/42), annex I.

[3] Ibid., Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 42 (A/54/42), annex III.

[4] A/52/312 and Corr.1 and 2 and Add.1 and 2; A/53/334 and Corr.1 and Add.1; A/54/226 and Add.1 and 2.

[5] Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 27 (A/53/27); ibid., Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 27 (A/54/27).

[6] Returns for the latest calendar year 1999 have not been completed and therefore the data for that year are incomplete.

[7] In the present report the data presented in figures 1 to 6 and tables 1 and 2 reflect submissions by Member States and other participating States as of 4 August 2000. Returns for the latest calendar year 1999 have not been completed and therefore the data for that year is incomplete.

[8] The unofficial list is used only for General Assembly elections.

[9] Force projection refers to the military capacity to transport army and air force units to a distant spot and, if necessary, land them under fire in order to engage a local enemy; and force multiplier refers to any piece of technology that allows a smaller body of soldiers, or a smaller group of tanks, artillery, fighter aircraft, etc., to defeat a larger force of similar type. The definitions were used only as a working basis to facilitate discussion in the Group, and are derived from David Robertson, *Guide to Modern Defense and Strategy* (Detroit, Michigan, Gale Research Company, 1987).

[10] Paragraph 2 (a) of the annex to General Assembly resolution 46/36 L identifies seven categories of equipment on which Member States are requested to supply data to the Register. Based on the adjustments to the annex developed by the 1992 Panel, which were reaffirmed by the 1994 and 1997 groups of experts, the categories and their definitions to be used for reporting to the Register are as follows: battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, large-calibre artillery systems, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, and missiles and missile launchers.

Inclusive definitions for the categories are presented in appendix I to the present report.

[11] Combat support refers to fire support and operational assistance provided to combat elements; and combat service support refers to support provided to combat forces, primarily in the fields of administration and logistics. For example, in the context of category I, a combat support system could be a bridge layer, while a combat service support system could be an armoured recovery vehicle. These definitions were used only as a working basis to facilitate discussion in

the Group, and are derived from North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Glossary of Terms and Definitions (modified version 01 AAP-6(V)), dated 16 July 1999.

[12] To date, the Convention has been signed by 19 OAS member States, including major conventional arms importers and exporters. The Convention grew out of an OAS resolution adopted in 1997 that stipulated that OAS would consider the desirability of a legal framework to provide advance notification of major arms acquisitions covered by the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

[13] In October 1998, members of ECOWAS agreed on a moratorium on the import, export and manufacture of small arms and light weapons in West Africa. Within the framework of the moratorium, they agreed in December 1999 to implement a subregional arms register. The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa is assisting in this effort within the framework of the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development in Africa (PCASED). See also Report of the Meeting of Experts, First Continental Meeting of African Experts on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Addis Ababa, 17-19 May 2000 (SALW/RPT/EXP(I)).

[14] Canada and Japan have agreed to organize a seminar for ARF participants, to be held jointly with an ASEAN member country, and with the participation of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, on "Transparency and Responsibility in Transfer of Conventional Weapons" in early 2001.

[15] As of 4 August 2000.

[16] Co-sponsorship by the Department for Disarmament Affairs was facilitated by a financial contribution from the Government of Japan.

Appendix I

Categories of equipment and their definitions

I. Battle tanks

Tracked or wheeled self-propelled armoured fighting vehicles with high cross-country mobility and a high level of self-protection, weighing at least 16.5 metric tonnes unladen weight, with a high-muzzle-velocity direct-fire main gun of a calibre of at least 75 millimetres.

II. Armoured combat vehicles

Tracked, semi-tracked or wheeled self-propelled vehicles, with armoured protection and cross-country capability, either: (a) designed and equipped to transport a squad of four or more infantrymen, or (b) armed with an integral or organic weapon of at least 12.5 mm calibre or a missile launcher.

III. Large-calibre artillery systems

Guns, howitzers, artillery pieces, combining the characteristics of a gun or a howitzer, mortars or multiple-launch rocket systems, capable of engaging surface targets by delivering primarily indirect fire, with a calibre of 100 mm and above.

IV. Combat aircraft

Fixed-wing or variable-geometry wing aircraft designed, equipped or modified to engage targets by employing guided missiles, unguided rockets, bombs, guns, cannons or other weapons of destruction, including versions of these aircraft which perform specialized electronic warfare, suppression of air defence or reconnaissance missions. The term "combat aircraft" does not include primary trainer aircraft, unless designed, equipped or modified as described above.

V. Attack helicopters

Rotary-wing aircraft designed, equipped or modified to engage targets by employing guided or unguided anti-armour, air-to-surface, air-to-subsurface, or air-to-air weapons and equipped with an integrated fire control and aiming system for these weapons, including versions of these aircraft which perform specialized reconnaissance or electronic warfare missions.

VI. Warships

Vessels or submarines armed and equipped for military use with a standard displacement of 750 metric tonnes or above, and those with a standard displacement of less than 750 metric tonnes, equipped for launching missiles with a range of at least 25 kilometres or torpedoes with similar range.

VII. Missiles and missile launchers

Guided or unguided rockets, ballistic or cruise missiles capable of delivering a warhead or weapon of destruction to a range of at least 25 kilometres, and means designed or modified specifically for launching such missiles or rockets, if not covered by categories I through VI. For the purpose of the Register, this category:

(a) Also includes remotely piloted vehicles with the characteristics for missiles as defined above;

(b) Does not include ground-to-air missiles.

Appendix II

Reporting forms

Annex 1

Standardized form for reporting international transfers of conventional arms (exports)[a]

Exports

Report of international conventional arms transfers
(according to United Nations General Assembly resolution 46/36 L)

Reporting country:

National point of contact:
(Organization, telephone, fax) (For governmental use only)

Calendar year:

A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*[b]	*Remarks*[c]	
Category (I-VII)	*Exporter State(s)*	*Number of items*	*State of origin (if not exporter)*	*Intermediate location (if any)*	*Description of item*	*Comments on the transfer*
I. Battle tanks						
II. Armoured combat vehicles						
III. Large-calibre artillery systems						
IV. Combat aircraft						
V. Attack helicopters						
VI. Warships						
VII. Missiles and missile launchers[d]						

National criteria on transfers:_____
The nature of information provided should be indicated in accordance with explanatory notes (e) and (f)

Explanatory notes

(a) Member States that do not have anything to report should file a "nil" report clearly stating that no exports or imports have taken place in any of the categories during the reporting period.

(b) International arms transfers involve, in addition to the physical movement of equipment into or from national territory, the transfer of title to and control over the equipment. Member States are invited to provide with their return a concise explanation of national criteria used to determine when an arms transfer becomes effective. (See paragraph 42 of the annex to document A/49/316.)

(c) In the "Remarks" column Member States may wish to describe the item transferred by entering the designation, type, model or any other information considered relevant. Member States may also wish to use the "Remarks" column to explain or clarify aspects relevant to the transfer.

(d) Multiple-launch rocket systems are covered by the definition of category III. Rockets qualifying for registration are covered under category VII. (See appendix I.)

(e) Check any of the following provided as part of your submission:

	Check
(i) Annual report on exports of arms	_____
(ii) Annual report on imports of arms	_____
(iii) Available background information on military holdings	_____
(iv) Available background information on procurement through national production	_____
(v) Available background information on relevant policies and/or national legislation	_____
(vi) Other (please describe)	_____

(f) When reporting transfers, which of the following criteria, drawn from paragraph 42 of the annex to document A/49/316, were used:

	Check
(i) Departure of equipment from the exporter's territory	_____
(ii) Arrival of equipment in the importer's territory	_____
(iii) Transfer of title	_____
(iv) Transfer of control	_____
(v) Other (please provide brief description below)	_____

Annex 2

Standardized form for reporting international transfers of conventional arms (imports)[a]

Imports

Report of international conventional arms transfers
(according to United Nations General Assembly resolution 46/36 L)

Reporting country:

National point of contact:
(Organization, telephone, fax) (For governmental use only)

Calendar year:

A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*[b]	*Remarks*[c]	
Category (I-VII)	*Exporter State(s)*	*Number of items*	*State of origin (if not exporter)*	*Intermediate location (if any)*	*Description of item*	*Comments on the transfer*
I. Battle tanks						
II. Armoured combat vehicles						
III. Large-calibre artillery systems						
IV. Combat aircraft						
V. Attack helicopters						
VI. Warships						
VII. Missiles and missile launchers[d]						

National criteria on transfers:_____
The nature of information provided should be indicated in accordance with explanatory notes (e) and (f)

Explanatory notes

(a) Member States that do not have anything to report should file a "nil" report clearly stating that no exports or imports have taken place in any of the categories during the reporting period.

(b) International arms transfers involve, in addition to the physical movement of equipment into or from national territory, the transfer of title to and control over the equipment. Member States are invited to provide with their return a concise explanation of national criteria used to determine when an arms transfer becomes effective. (See paragraph 42 of the annex to document A/49/316.)

(c) In the "Remarks" column Member States may wish to describe the item transferred by entering the designation, type, model or any other information considered relevant. Member States may also wish to use the "Remarks" column to explain or clarify aspects relevant to the transfer.

(d) Multiple-launch rocket systems are covered by the definition of category III. Rockets qualifying for registration are covered under category VII. (See appendix I.)

(e) Check any of the following provided as part of your submission:

	Check
(i) Annual report on exports of arms	____
(ii) Annual report on imports of arms	____
(iii) Available background information on military holdings	____
(iv) Available background information on procurement through national production	____
(v) Available background information on relevant policies and/or national legislation	____
(vi) Other (please describe)	____

(f) When reporting transfers, which of the following criteria, drawn from paragraph 42 of the annex to document A/49/316, were used:

	Check
(i) Departure of equipment from the exporter's territory	____
(ii) Arrival of equipment in the importer's territory	____
(iii) Transfer of title	____
(iv) Transfer of control	____
(v) Other (please provide brief description below)	____